

9-8720

16 November 1957

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION WITH SENATOR ELLENDER

1. A debriefing of Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana was held on 9 November in the Director's conference room. Senator Ellender returned recently from a month's tour of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the Middle East.
2. Throughout the conversation, the Senator stressed the following points:
  - A. The Soviet people are extremely sensitive to Western criticism of communism. Most of the people appear to believe that the Soviet system has accomplished a great deal in improving their lot. The Senator believes, however, there are strong evolutionary pressures not under the control of the government which may bring about a much greater improvement in the people's welfare.

He believes this evolutionary process can be aided and the present Soviet emphasis on an arms build-up inhibited by an information campaign directed to the Soviet people which would concentrate on extolling the advantages of the American system. Such a campaign, however, should avoid "the great bone of contention" by not criticizing communism or the Soviet system.
  - B. A broader exchange of visitors with the Soviet Union would play an important part in further encouraging this development.
3. On his tour of the Soviet provinces, particularly Siberia, the Senator was struck by the "astounding economic development" of the area. He commented on the great industrial build-up in the Novosibirsk-Krasnoyarsk region and the huge hydro-electric development around Irkutsk where, for instance, 6,300,000 kilowatts of electricity are about to be produced from two new plants.

Senator Ellender believes that in a relatively short period of time the industrial development of the Eastern parts of the USSR will surpass that of the Western and central regions.

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- 2 -

4. In discussing agriculture, the Senator predicted important changes affecting the collective farm system. He noted that collectives are now being permitted to buy more machinery and believes that in the near future the larger farms will be allowed to own at least some of their own tractors and harvesting equipment. While this development might weaken state control now exercised through the Machine-Tractor Stations, it will probably be carried out in the expectation of improving production.
5. Senator Ellender considered the New Lands area somewhat of a disappointment to the Soviet leaders, and received some intimation of this in his talk with Deputy Premier Mikoyan. The Senator feels certain the Karaganda-Akmolinsk sections of Kazakhstan now devoted to the New Lands will deteriorate into a dust bowl if cultivation there is continued. He said, however, that farther east, where the topsoil is much deeper, the New Lands experiment seemed to be quite successful.

The Senator believes that the Soviet government will abolish forced deliveries of agricultural products to the state by 1958 or 1959 and that this will eliminate one of the chief sources of peasant discontent.

In regard to Satellite agriculture, the Senator noted that in several countries, the collectivization drive was again moving ahead successfully.

6. Senator Ellender commented that the Soviet economic reorganization was considered a great step forward by the provincial officials with whom he talked. He said that the decentralization had spurred production competition between neighboring areas and that this would be translated into increased output. The Senator was told that there had been considerable opposition among provincial leaders to the Sixth Five-Year Plan and he speculated that this opposition may have been one reason it was abandoned.
7. Senator Ellender remarked that he had made a special trip to Syria in order to investigate the charges that Russian technicians and advisers were present there in large numbers. This allegation was denied consistently by all of the Syrian leaders with whom he talked.

- 3 -

The Syrians admitted that about a "score" of Soviet officials were in Syria to study the economy for purposes of planning Soviet loans. They denied that any Soviet military advisers were present and said that Egyptian technicians and some Czechs were training the Syrian army in the use of military equipment received from the Soviet Union. Senator Ellender was invited to tour the country in order to "see for himself" that the charges of a large number of Soviet officials in Syria were false.

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19 November 1957

FOR: Maj. Gen. W. B. Persons, USA  
Dep. Asst. to the President  
The White House,  
Washington, D. C.

Pursuant to our recent conversation, I enclose a brief memorandum covering several hours of a talk which a group of our experts recently had with Senator Ellender. I was present for most of it and will give you my personal views when I next see you.

AWD